

Maharlika

PINOY LIFE IN THE MARIANAS

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Saturday, May 27, 2006

Released

Five opposition supporters arrested in an alleged plot to assassinate Cabinet members were released for lack of evidence.

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Barong Tagalog

While it usually takes a fashion designer like Frederick Peralta six to eight months to create an ideal wedding gown, it takes him only two to three months to make a formal suit or barong.

Page 6



RP, US forge new accord

New security arrangement aims to intensify fight vs terrorism

By JIM GOMEZ
AP WRITER

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The U.S. and the Philippines on Wednesday announced a new security arrangement that formally expands the grounds for American forces to stage exercises in the country and enhances the two nations' battle against terrorism and other threats.

The agreement involves setting up a new joint panel called the Security

Engagement Board, described in a Philippine government statement as a "new consultative mechanism for cooperation on nontraditional security concerns," including terrorism, crime, maritime safety and security, natural and man-made disasters and epidemics.

The board, co-chaired by the Philippine military chief of staff and the U.S. Pacific commander, will develop measures to enhance cooperation between the two allies.

RP Page 2

Palace welcomes US bill lifting the limit on nurses' migration

Malacañang welcomes a measure filed before the United States Senate that seeks to lift the limit imposed on the number of nurses who can migrate to the US, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's spokesman said Thursday.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye allayed fears by some groups that the measure the US Senate was expected to pass soon will hurt the country's

health care system, which was already facing a severe shortage of nurses.

The US legislation removing the cap on the hiring of nurses was needed to help the US cope with its own growing shortage of nurses, reports said.

"New nurses keep coming up, they are replaced at almost the same rate they are recruited, so I think we will not

PALACE Page 2

Filipinos on Tinian form new group

Filipinos on Tinian have come together to form a new organization, the United Filipinos in Tinian.

Currently having 70 members, Unifil is a non-profit organization aiming to establish closer ties among Filipinos in the island and conduct volunteer work that will benefit its members and the Tinian community.

The group was established April 11, 2006 and conducted an induction ceremony for its newly elected officers and board of directors last Saturday, May 26, 2006.

First Lady Josie P. Fitial was the guest speaker.

"I'm very happy to see a group

FILIPINOS Page 2



Philippine National Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz gestures as he answers media queries about the new accord between the United States and the Philippines during a press conference Wednesday, May 24, 2006 in suburban Quezon city north of Manila.

AP

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PINOYNEWS

Lawmakers want Marcos deal probed

Saying the administration had yet to explain its “anomalous” use of Marcos funds during the 2004 elections, militant lawmakers yesterday called for an investigation of the government’s impending compromise agreement with the family of the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos.

Bayan Muna party-list Representative Satur Ocampo and five other militant lawmakers filed House Resolution No. 1264 in Congress seeking an inquiry into the alleged compromise deal between the Presidential Com-

mission on Good Government and former First Lady Imelda Marcos.

Ocampo and Representatives Teodoro Casiño, Joel Virador, Crispin Beltran, Rafael Mariano and Liza Maza insisted the government could not drop the criminal charges against the Marcoses as part of a compromise deal.

“Mrs. Marcos still faces numerous graft cases in local courts, but no Marcos family member or any of their associates has ever been convicted or jailed for corruption,” they said in the resolution.

“Compromise agreements between the PCGG and the Marcoses, based on the condition that criminal charges be dropped, abet the continued victimization of the victims of Marcos human rights violations and steal from Filipino martyrs the justice that they have so heroically fought for,” they added.

The lawmakers noted that the House Oversight Committee in April and August 2005 failed to resolve how and why more than P6 billion worth of recovered Marcos funds were released in the run-up to the May 2004

elections and for the vote count thereafter.

They added that around P100 million of the Marcos funds were also released for the government’s contro-

versial fertilizer fund, some of which ended up in cities with no farms, when the law requires that the funds would be used only for land reform.

They said the PCGG “cannot preempt the courts” and could only compromise the civil “and not the criminal aspect” of the cases against the Marcoses. (PDI)

FILIPINOS

FROM PAGE 1

like yours on Tinian—an active group dedicated to helping each other and to supporting our local community. I sincerely believe that the services and the volunteer work that you provide to the Tinian Filipino community are very valuable, and perhaps even as valuable or even more valuable than some of the services provided by government. I say this because I strongly believe in the power of private associations to effect

change and provide mutual support to its membership.

“This is really a bright spot for the CNMI, where we have many private non-profit groups and associations like your own. It’s important to continue to have these mutual aid societies where members can network with each other and share valuable information to assist the membership,” Fitial told the Unifil members.

Unifil is led by president Corazon T. Cepeda, vice president Conrado T. Libut,

secretary Rodney S. Caballes, treasurer Sonia Pascua, auditor Fely M. Almogela, business manager Mary Susan M. Cruz, and public relation officers Yolanda L. Barcina and Jun B. Bugarin.

The board of directors includes Cepeda, who also serves as chairwoman, and members Lemuel C. Arabelo, Rolly B. Bugarin, Librada D. Cruz, Violeta Guiao, Antonio C. Kuan, and Leonardo Pascua.

Unifil has two advisers: Fr. Ambet Dela Cruz and Fausto Supnet. (Agnes E. Donato)

Peso bucks regional recovery

The peso closed at a new four-month low of 52.95 to the dollar Thursday, when most other Asian currencies recovered somewhat from declines in the past two weeks.

Selling pressure remained intense but central bank intervention in the open market kept the peso from sliding past 53.00 to the dollar, currency traders said.

The closing rate was the weakest since Jan. 20, when the peso ended at 52.96 to the greenback.

On Thursday, the peso closed at 52.85 to the dollar.

Dealers said the peso could have fallen further Thursday had the central bank not sold dollars on the spot market at the closing rate of 52.95 to the dollar. They said the central bank sold about \$50 million.

Dealers said foreign exchange market players remained cautious because offshore investors were cutting back on exposure in emerging markets amid the possibility of a further increase in key interest rates in the US next month.

A trader said “there was demand (for dollars) from importers as well as some month-end corporate demand.”

Traders said Philippine exporters were

holding on to their dollars, waiting for better exchange rates, which was not the case in other countries, where dollar sales by exporters eased pressure on their currencies.

The trading volume was relatively thin at \$285 million, coinciding with an ACI World Congress being hosted by the Philippines and attended by foreign exchange traders from across the globe.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said Thursday that the weakening of the peso was a result of “temporary events in the world economy” and that economic authorities were looking at the situation.

She said the economy remained “steady and strong.”

“The recent setback of the peso is a result of transient developments in the world economy that pose no direct, long-term threat to our own,” she said at a meeting of the organization of local government councilors.

She added that investor confidence remained strong because of her administration’s efforts to balance the budget, improve the security situation, “push growth, and pursue political renewal.” Lira Dalangin-Fernandez, INQ7.net

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RP

FROM PAGE 1

“The establishment of the SEB further strengthens our partnership,” the statement quoted U.S. Ambassador Kristie Kenney as saying, noting that the Philippines was a longtime friend and major non-NATO ally.

The two nations signed a 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty that calls for cooperation in battling external security threats in either country. They also have signed a Visiting Forces Agreement that allows U.S. forces to join large-scale military exercises in the Philippines.

Philippine Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz said that under the SEB, both nations can now discuss possible actions and organize joint exercises against nontraditional threats like terrorism, drugs smuggling, natural disasters and potential pandemics like bird flu.

“For bird flu, we can do joint

exercises, the proper response. If you’re practicing for bird flu and do that under the Mutual Defense Board which is for invasion, that’s not the appropriate forum,” Cruz told a news conference.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is one of Asia’s most vocal backers of Washington’s global war on terror and has allowed U.S. forces to train and arm Filipino soldiers battling al-Qaida-linked militants in the southern region of Mindanao, the scene of decades-old separatist uprisings.

Although both governments have justified the American military presence in the south as part of authorized joint military exercises, left-wing groups have questioned the legality of U.S. troops’ presence near southern battle zones and have demanded their withdrawal.

The Philippine Constitution forbids foreign troops from engaging in local combat.

A prominent left-wing group

criticized the new security arrangement, claiming it would broaden Washington’s platform to intervene in the country’s domestic affairs.

“It’s a very blatant way for the U.S. to intervene in our domestic affairs,” said Renato Reyes, head of Bayan, the largest left-wing group in the country. “They want to broaden that intervention. And this can be used by Mrs. Arroyo to get U.S. support to stay in power. It’s very dangerous.”

Impoverished Mindanao, home to the country’s minority Muslims, has been the scene of high-profile kidnappings, beheadings, bomb attacks and acts of banditry blamed on a small but violent al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf, which is on Washington’s list of terrorist organizations.

Abu Sayyaf rebels abducted three Americans from a resort in 2001. One was beheaded by the rebels, another was killed and the third wounded but rescued during a U.S.-backed Philippine army commando assault.

most especially their families, who use the money to finance the schooling of those willing to take up nursing.

What the government can do is to accelerate the training of those in medical services, Bunye said. (PDI)

PALACE

FROM PAGE 1

have shortage of manpower,” Bunye said.

Besides, Bunye said the government could not prevent its manpower from leaving

the country to seek “greener pastures.”

He added that Filipino talents were “marketable,” being known as world-class workers.

He also said that remittances sent by Filipinos overseas did not only help the country but

LABOR FRONT

Non-renewal of contracts

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

Q: What will happen if an alien worker seeks a new employer after the expiration of his or her employment contract?

A: The worker may cease to work for that employer and seek a new employer without the necessity of exiting the Commonwealth. In such a case, no reimbursement or indemnification is required of the former employer by the new employer.

According to the Alien Labor Rules and Regulations, Labor shall strictly enforce the requirement of 30 days notice by the employer to renew or not to renew the contract of a nonresident worker. If a notice not to renew is timely served upon the employee, the employee shall have 15 days after the end of the contract term to secure new employment.

If the employer fails to serve timely notice not to renew upon the employee, then the employee shall have 45 days after the end of the contract term to secure new employment. The 45 days runs from the date of expiration of the previous contract to the date of submission of a completed application.

Q: If at the end of the 45-day period the guest worker has not found new employment, does he or she needs to depart the CNMI?

A: Yes. If the worker does not depart, he or she will be subject to deportation as provided by law. The employee must give the employer 30 days notice of intent not to renew the contract. If the employee fails to give 30 days notice the employee has only 15 days following expiration of the contract to secure a new employer.

Q: What will happen when an application for employment is filed, but deficiencies are discovered in the papers?

A: If deficiencies are noted, Labor shall notify the employer applicant and the employee shall be notified in writing to correct the deficiency. The employer and employee will have 20 days to rectify the deficiencies. Failure to correct the deficiencies within the prescribed period shall result in denial of the application. The application can only be resubmitted or a new application with a different employer processed if the initial 45-day period has not yet run.

Neither the prospective employer nor the employee needs to reimburse the original employer for recruitment or hiring costs.

Submit questions on labor issues to Saipan Tribune via e-mail at editor@saipantribune.com, or by calling 235-6397, 235-2440, or 235-8747 and leaving a message at Ext. 133 or 135. You may also submit questions in person by writing it down and dropping it off at the Saipan Tribune's office on the second floor of the CIC Centre on Beach Road, Garapan.

Deadline set for Gulf War claims

The Philippine government's Department of Foreign Affairs has announced that the United Nations Compensation Commission Governing Council in Geneva, during its 56th session, has set Sept. 30, 2006, as the final deadline in locating and paying Gulf War claimants who had been affected by the 1980 Iraq-Kuwait war and with approved claims from the UNCC.

Philippine Claims and Compensation Committee Secretariat Secretary General Minda C. Cruz stated that based on PCCCS records, there are still Gulf War claimants who have not coordinated with PCCCS despite efforts to reach them through mail, saturation drives within Philippine Foreign Service Posts. She said that PCCCS now calls on these claimants to coordinate with the office at the soonest possible time.

"These claimants must coordinate with PCCCS before the set deadline because, after Sept. 30 2006, UNCC will no longer entertain Philippine Government requests for the return of funds to be paid to applicants whose claims have already been approved by the UNCC," said Cruz.

She added that the "PCCCS now calls on all OFWs who were affected by the war in Iraq and Kuwait in 1990 and who have claims approved by the UNCC to call the office at telephone number 832-5303, or visit us at the 3rd floor of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Pasay City so that they can find out if they are included in the UNCC list of approved claims."

A list of the concerned Gulf War claimants is available at the Philippine Consulate General's Office at the Nauru Building in Susupe. (PR)

San Francisco Chronicle has podcast for Filipinos

By ERWIN OLIVA
INQ7.NET

PINNOY POD

The Star Spangled Banner in Tagalog? And fun and laughs with Rex Navarrete

The San Francisco Chronicle launches the first of its kind: a **Podcast channel for Filipinos** in the Bay Area and beyond. This weekly program will feature stories and interviews on the Filipino experience. Some of the episodes will be in **Tagalog** and other Philippine languages. We're trying something new here. Do you want to know more? Check out this introductory podcast. **Kakaiba po ito. Mga kuwentong Pinoy!**

People can download or listen to the Pinoy Pod at www.sfgate.com/blogs/podcasts. Listen to Filipino folk singer **Joey Ayala** explain why he wrote the song and two passionate reactions to the unusual tune.

In the second segment, we present a conversation with comedian **Rex Navarrete**, who just launched a new sitcom in Manila called "Rex in the City." In a long chat with **Deputy Managing Editor Leslie Guevarra** and **Pinoy Pod producer Ben Pimentel**, the San Francisco native talks about tickling the **Pinoy funny bone** in the Philippines and looks back on his life as a newly-arrived immigrant boy from the Philippines.



Cover Art by Danny Lee/The Chronicle

[Listen/Download Audio](#) | 24:36 min : 20.74 MB

A podcast is a radio show that one can listen to or download from the Internet.

The first episode highlights Joey Ayala's rendition of the Star Spangled Banner in

Filipino, and the subsequent interview

with him on why he translated the Ameri-

can anthem into Filipino.

The first episode also features famous Filipino stand-up comedian Rex Navarrete

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration is informing the Filipino community in the CNMI of a free health screening scheduled this June 4, 2006, from 9am to 12noon at the ground floor of the Nauru Building in Susupe.

Individuals who would like to avail of blood sugar testing should fast (no food or water) from midnight of June 3, 2006, up to the time of their check up.

Also, OWWA is informing the Filipino community that

May 19, 2006.

Overseas Workers Welfare Officer Mary Dait said the health screening is in line with the upcoming celebration of the Migrant Workers' Day on June 7, 2006. (Marconi Calindas)

Free health screening at OWWA

the English Developmental Course Batch II will start this May 21, 2006. The course will include grammar, vocabulary development, conversational English, phonics, and writing. The last day for registration was yesterday

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who uses Filipino culture as a basis for his sketches.

The podcast episodes are mainly in English but the Filipino language will in the future be used to reach more Filipinos, the podcast's proponents said.

Pinoy Pod is a product of the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s Filipino journalists deputy managing editor Leslie Guevarra, editorial writer and columnist Pati Poblete, podcast producer Benny Evangelista, business reporter and Pinoy Pod producer Ben Pimentel, reporter Cicero Estrella and copy editor Michelle Louie.

Pinoy Pod will include topics on arts, culture, entertainment, business and political and social issues. It will run from 10 to 20 minutes, and will be updated Tuesdays.

According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, this is the first time a major American newspaper is offering a podcast for Filipinos.

5 Estrada supporters released

MANILA, Philippines (AP) —Five opposition supporters arrested in an alleged plot to assassinate Cabinet members were released for lack of evidence and plan to file complaints of torture against police and the military, officials said Friday.

The men were arrested by plainclothes agents without a warrant Monday, and their whereabouts were confirmed by police and the military only three days later, after their relatives complained they were abducted.

One of them, Ruben Dionisio, allegedly a communist rebel hit man, told reporters that he had been beaten and electrocuted by arresting police and soldiers.

Police Senior Superintendent Asher Dolina denied the accusation, saying Dionisio had resisted arrest and that agents scuffled with him. Military spokesman Maj. Gen. Jose Angel Honrado challenged Dionisio to file a formal complaint and said any soldier found responsible would be prosecuted.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales told the Philippine Daily Inquirer that evidence against the men was insufficient and he ordered them released.

Authorities did not reveal

details of the alleged plot, which comes amid persistent political and security tensions after the government foiled an alleged coup Feb. 24 involving disgruntled soldiers, communist rebels and civilian backers.

The government subsequently filed charges of rebellion—which don't require an arrest warrant—against dozens of opposition supporters and military personnel, whose cases were pending in courts.

The five men were supporters of ousted President Joseph Estrada, a political archrival of current President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo who succeeded him after he was overthrown on corruption charges in January 2001.

Hours before the men were released Thursday, Arroyo's spokesman Ignacio Bunye praised their arrests, saying, "If the lives of Cabinet members were indeed at peril in the hands of these men, it is better that they were interdicted before they could cause serious harm to public order."

Estrada's spokesman Didiagen Dilangan said lawyers for the men will file criminal complaints that could include illegal arrest, physical injuries and arbitrary detention.

RP policeman arrested in journalist's killing

By OLIVER TEVES
AP WRITER

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Philippine prosecutors on Thursday charged a policeman in the murder of a radio broadcaster who had chastised him on air for purportedly pointing his gun at a waitress, officials said.

Witnesses said two men on a motorcycle fatally shot Fernando Batul, a commentator for DYPR Radio in southwestern Palawan province's Puerto Princesa city, while he was driving his car to work Monday.

Batul, a former vice mayor, died two days before his 37th birthday.

Police officer Aaron Golifardo was arrested Wednesday at national police headquarters in Manila, national police spokesman Senior Superintendent Samuel Pagdilao said.

He was flown back Thursday to Puerto Princesa, where he was formally charged with murder, city prosecutor Carlos Santos said.

Four eyewitnesses identified Golifardo as one of the men who fired at Batul, Santos said, adding that the accused policeman was driving the motorcycle and that a second as yet unidentified man was riding on the back.

"They were positive that it was him," Santos said. "The motive has not been established, but if there is positive identification. The motive is not necessary."



Ousted Philippine President Joseph Estrada, right, holds computer print outs of five abducted supporters as he meets their relatives, left, following his testimony at his 5-year-old plunder trial at an anti-graft court at suburban Quezon city Wednesday May 24, 2006 north of Manila, Philippines.

Palace sidesteps criticism over detention of Estrada supporters

By GIL C. CABACUNGAN JR.
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Malacañang yesterday sidestepped criticism on the warrantless arrest and alleged torture of five supporters of ousted President Joseph Estrada, and hailed the military's handling of what it described as "a serious matter of criminal justice."

"I think what is important is the five have been arrested for an alleged conspiracy," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye when asked if the Palace would order an inquiry into the action of the Armed Forces.

The five men—Ruben Dionisio, Virgilio Eustaquo, Jim Lucio Cabauatan, Dennis Ibuna and police officer-3 Jose Justo Curameng—were arrested on Monday in Quezon City for their alleged involvement in a plot to assassinate Cabinet officials.

They were released last night on orders of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

"The proper charges have been filed,

so let's move on from there. I don't think it will be productive to find fault, if there is any fault as far as the process is concerned. I think we should move forward and just hear this case," Bunye told reporters at a briefing.

Bunye sought to clarify the apparent miscommunication among government officials on the status of the five men, as illustrated by the AFP's denial of custody only to admit it later.

Operational matter

"It's possible that at one point, the person who was asked actually did not have the complete information," he said.

Bunye declined to directly address the claims of the Estrada supporters that they were held without warrants and that they were tortured while in military custody.

"Let the authorities holding them in custody answer these questions. But as a matter of policy, we do not condone any

malreatment of any person under detention. As to the handling of the detainees, it's an operational matter," he said.

But Bunye was clear on one point: "This is a serious matter of criminal justice and the charges have already been filed. If the lives of Cabinet members were indeed at peril in the hands of these men, it is better that they were interdicted before they could cause serious harm to public order. Assassins of any ideological or criminal stripe should be stopped, and this administration is determined to get at the root of these cases as well as other violent plots or slayings."

Bunye, however, said the five men would have their day in court and access to counsel.

"If they are innocent, they can prove their innocence in court," he said.

He justified the arrests by saying that the government could not just wait to act until something bad happens.

"What is important is they have filed their charges—that's the proper procedure. They have access to the media; they are able to present their side. But let's wait for the results of the trial," he said.

RP, OIC to review 10-year-old pact with Muslim rebels

By TERESA CEROJANO
AP WRITER

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Philippines have agreed to hold high-level talks in Saudi Arabia with leaders of a former Muslim rebel group to review a 10-year-old peace pact amid complaints that progress has been slow, a joint statement said Wednesday.

The statement, issued at the end of a visit to the southern

Philippines by a team from the 57-member Islamic group, called for an early resolution of a rebellion case brought against detained Moro National Liberation Front leader Nur Misuari, who signed the peace deal in 1996.

The OIC mission "expressed the hope that Chairman Nur Misuari will be able to participate in the proposed tripartite meeting" in the Red Sea city of Jeddah, the statement said.

Misuari was detained in Manila on rebellion charges

following a failed uprising by his followers in 2001 that killed more than 100 people.

The MNLF dropped its demand for independence in favor of limited autonomy when it signed the 1996 accord, which put five predominantly Muslim provinces and a city in the southern Philippines into an autonomous region as part of government efforts to deal with a decades-long Muslim separatist rebellion.

But the area has remained impoverished, and plagued by

violence and divisions.

Zayed El-Masry, the OIC special envoy, complained that 10 years after the signing of the agreement, "there's very slow implementation and a lot of problems, so we want to intervene."

The OIC said progress under the pact and in continuing peace negotiations with another Muslim rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, should be consolidated to "bring comprehensive peace and development" to the country's minority Muslims.

PINOYSTYLE

CAPTAIN BARBELL



By NINI VALERA
INQUIRER

Fifty million pesos and counting.

This is how much GMA 7 has spent to mount the Mars Ravelo komiks classic "Captain Marvel" as a prime time series.

Rams David, production manager, said most of the budget was spent on special effects and Captain Barbell's costume, designed by Miles Teves, the Hollywood costumer who made the outfits in "Batman Forever," "Robocop," and "Spiderman."

Captain Barbell's costume reportedly cost about \$50,000. Director Dominic Zapata said the outfit, updated for the 21st century, was crucial to bringing the beloved komiks hero to modern times.

Zapata recounted, by way of explaining: "When I first heard that 'Batman' was being remade—I was still a kid

then—I didn't think that would be cool because I had associated the character with Adam West. I vowed not to watch the movie. But when I saw the costumes, I said, 'Hey, this movie is for me; it would entertain me.'"

When it was time to remake "Barbell," Zapata recalled his reaction to the Tim Burton movie... and its fabulous, if sinister-looking, costumes.

"I suggested that we talk to the one who designed [Batman's] costume," Zapata said. "I said, let's kick ass. When kids see this Captain Barbell, they would cease to think that he's a hero of their Dad's generation, and make him their own."

However, Ravelo's heirs had given their final decision regarding Barbell's look. "We couldn't toy around too much with the costume," Zapata admitted. "They gave the specifications, the colors. They had creative control all the way. We pushed as far as we could."



Richard Gutierrez in the \$50,000 suit.

But the Barbell suit was just one thing, according to Zapata. Technology had a bigger role in taking Barbell to modern times.

He described the special effects as cutting edge and "comparable to what you see in Hollywood."

For example, he said, Barbell will no longer fly only in a straight line. "We'll have what is called a digital double—totally computer-animated, so we could make him weave in and out of buildings, fly in a way that [Richard] could never do, no matter how many wires we put on him."

Though huge by local standards, the budget was not limitless. "There were other things we could not afford," Zapata admitted.

But it all boils down to the story, he said. "If it's a good story, that's enough inspiration for me."

Zapata previously directed "Darna," "Sugo," "Mulawin" and "Mulawin, the Movie." As far as his work on "Barbell" is concerned, he said, only a marriage between Captain Barbell and Darna could top it.

'Direk Joey' doesn't live here anymore

By BAYANI SAN DIEGO JR.
INQUIRER

Filmmaker Jose Javier Reyes has confirmed the rumor.

"I am no longer connected with ABS-CBN on an official and exclusive basis," he told Inquirer Entertainment in a phone interview on Wednesday.

Reyes, known as "Direk Joey" in show biz circles, hosted the Kapamilya network's Saturday gossip show "ETK" until it was reformatted into "Entertainment Konek." He was transferred to the model search "Close Up to Fame 2" as one of the judges.

"Close Up to Fame 2," which has a limited run (until July), took over the time slot of "ETK."

On June 3, the youth sitcom "Let's Go" replaces "Konek," which is hosted by Direk Joey's former co-hosts on "ETK," Ogie Diaz and Toni Gonzaga, with Inquirer Entertainment columnist Dolly Ann Carvajal as guest co-host.

Reyes chose to retain his position as creative consultant on the network's Sunday night gab fest "Sharon," hosted by singer-actress Sharon Cuneta.

"As of now, I'm only a talent [of ABS-CBN]," Reyes explained and added, in jest, that his relationship with the station was now "an open marriage."

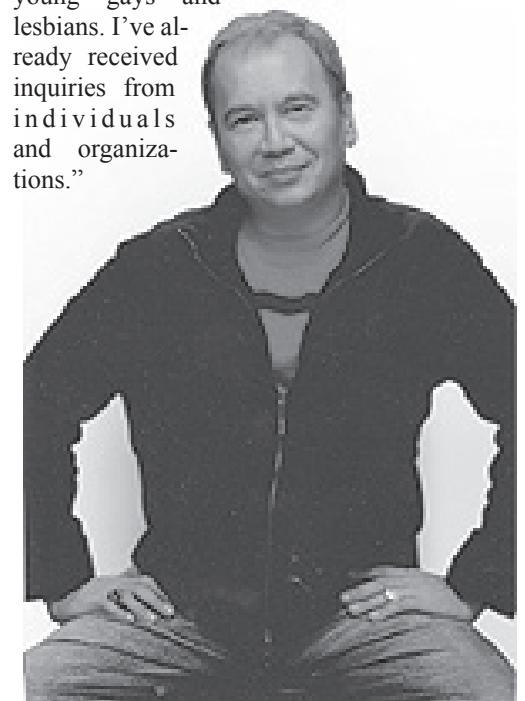
Did this mean he could now work in rival channels? "I can work with anyone," he replied. "But, as of now, I'll follow Sharon's advice and give lectures and workshops on script writing and acting. I'll initially conduct these seminars independently of the networks."

He said he had become much too identified with the Kapamilya network since accepting "ETK" over a year ago. "The most convenient thing to do is to purge my connection with the network."

This was easier said than done, he admitted, especially since he had grown fond of his co-workers on "Sharon" and "ETK."

"I love them," he said. "In fact, I told Sharon that she's the only reason that I'm not leaving. I promised her, 'Walang iwanan (We will stick together).'"

After his contract with ABS-CBN expired in



Filmmaker Jose Javier Reyes confirms that he is no longer with ABS-CBN.

'Komiks' vs 'Fantastikids!'

By PAUL DAZA
INQUIRER

There's yet another fierce war being waged in the TV universe Saturdays at 6 p.m. In one corner is the defending champion, ABS-CBN's pulp anthology "Komiks." In the other is GMA's all-new, serialized adventure "Fantastikids," which the Kapuso network fielded when its horror anthology "Wag Kukurap" was trounced by "Komiks" a couple of months ago.

Which show is more popular? In terms of the all-important ratings, "Fantastikids" has the edge in Metro Manila, perhaps because it's newer. Saturday before last was the sophomore telecast, which rated a 24.6 versus 21.5 for "Komiks." To create new excitement for "Komiks," on-air for more than three months now, ABS-CBN brought in drama princess Judy Ann Santos to usher in the anthology's second season. This may have been a reaction to the fantastic premiere of "Fantastikids," which clobbered Komiks' ratings on May 6th.

What about such intangible discussion points as originality, production value, and storytelling?

Where "Komiks" gets its storylines from enduring, decades-old pulp fiction like "Machete," "Inday Bote," and "Inday Sa Balitaw," the creators of "Fantastikids" have had to create characters and plots from scratch. The only originality involved in creating each episode of "Komiks" is in streamlining a plot originally told over dozens of issues of a weekly comic book, and crafting from this a story that can be told in one or two 90-minute episodes. The other week's episode, "Inday Sa Balitaw," may have also drawn on the 1986 Regal Films issue, "Inday, Inday Sa Balitaw" for inspiration.

From thin air

With "Fantastikids," the creators had to worry about more than just editing. They had to create characters out of thin air and put them in a plot

that was old yet new, original yet accessible. So far, they've succeeded. In telling its tale of a trio of siblings who are given extraordinary powers when their mother dies, "Fantastikids" mixes up themes from "Panday," the Harry Potter adventures and other sources to give televiewers an unrecognizable hybrid that feels and looks fresh. Where else but in "Fantastikids" can you find three young heroes whose supernatural powers are derived from a cellphone, a powder compact, and a blanket?

And star power? Because "Komiks" changes stories every Saturday, they can cast whoever is ABS-CBN's flavor of the week. In addition to the ever-popular Judy Ann Santos as the title character in "Inday Sa Balitaw," Alma Moreno, Malou de Guzman, James Blanco, and Nash Aguas also provided support.

In contrast, "Fantastikids" is gambling squarely on its untried cast, hoping to create viewer loyalty for youngsters Marky Cielo, Jackie Rice, Isabella de Leon, and BJ Forbes, with seasoned performers like Sandy Andolong and Melanie Marquez providing support. Based on ratings, however, it would seem like the new Kapuso stars are outshining the more established Kapamilya performers.

In terms of pacing and storytelling, "Komiks" had the edge over "Fantastikids" that week. The pace of "Inday Sa Balitaw" never dragged, even though it was on-air 30 minutes longer than "Fantastikids." In telling the (unfinished) story of how an atay (Judy Ann Santos) ended up being fought over by two mothers (Malou de Guzman and Alma Moreno) and being protected by an elf (Nash Aguas), "Komiks" flew from one scene to the next at an assured, unflagging pace. Its producers seemed to know that they had more than enough good material to craft an episode from.

"Fantastikids," by contrast, was bogged down in parts by talky exposition and an inexplicable climax. The talky bits, we can forgive, because the introduction of characters and establishment of plot is a necessary part of telling a continuing story. But what's the explanation for the outdoor beauty pageant scene, where everyone in the crowd mysteriously vanished, only to reappear moments later with no explanation?

By ALEX Y. VERGARA
INQUIRER

While it usually takes a fashion designer like Frederick Peralta six to eight months to create an ideal wedding gown, it takes him only two to three months to make a formal suit or barong. If worse comes to worst, he can piece together a decent suit within three to four days.

Despite the hefty surcharge he bills clients for rush orders, however, Peralta discourages would-be grooms to visit him at the eleventh hour. Men, he says, should never take themselves for granted. After all, it's their big day, too.

"Since most guys are busy preparing for their weddings," he says, "they tend to forget themselves. They shouldn't. They should psyche themselves up and synchronize their wedding preparations with the bride."

Why the ample lead time? Peralta needs it to order materials, schedule them for production and pick a specific day for fitting. The final price tag will depend on such factors as design, type of materials and the groom's size.

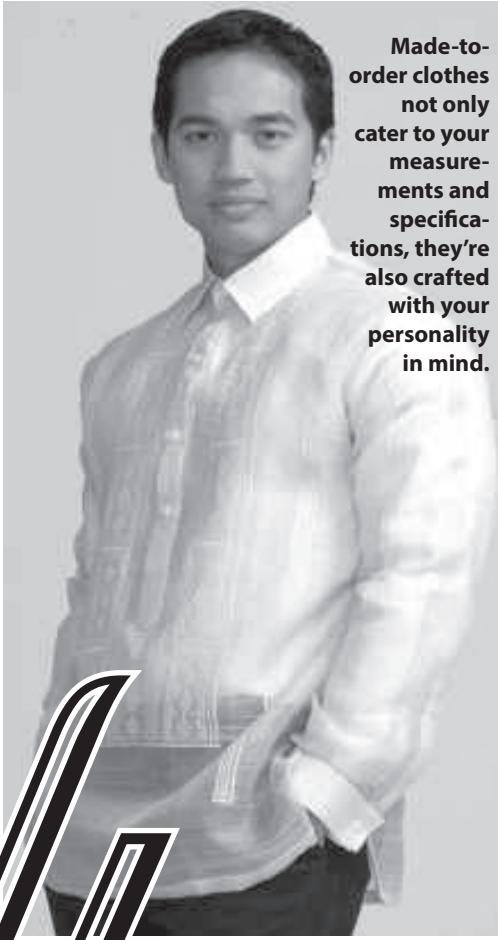
His suits and barongs start at P15,000, while a pair of pants costs anywhere from P4,000-P5,000. You can probably save a considerable amount of money by buying a suit or barong off the rack, but don't be surprised if you bump into a guest (or worse the head waiter) wearing the same stuff.

"It's not that I discourage men from going RTW," he says, "but you shouldn't expect a great deal of original and flattering details from such pieces."

And unless you're gifted with a model's body, off-the-rack suits usually entail a great deal of repair work to be able to fit you like second skin. Why go through all the trouble when you can have a suit or barong made especially for you?

Made-to-order clothes not only cater to your measurements and specifications, they're also crafted with your person-

Made-to-order clothes not only cater to your measurements and specifications, they're also crafted with your personality in mind.



Groomed for the altar



Looser tops made of cotton voile, banana cloth or the trusty piña are acceptable alternatives to the formal barong if you're to exchange "I dos" on the beach.

ality in mind. What's more, they're intended to cover your imperfections (a big tummy and short legs are just two of the average Filipino's most common flaws) and highlight your assets.

"By going MTO, you're in a position to ask the designer to make clothes that you'll feel comfortable in," says Peralta. "You can ask

him, for example, to make them either looser or tapered."

Of course, three-piece suits are best reserved for indoor weddings (preferably in Baguio or Tagaytay) and those scheduled during cool months. Looser tops made of cotton voile, banana cloth or the trusty piña are acceptable alternatives to the formal barong if you're to exchange "I dos" on the beach.

A bow tie is your best bet if you plan to wear a traditional tux. Should you opt for a necktie, Peralta warns you to stay away from the office-striped and the attention-grabbing floral-printed variety. Go instead for a textured necktie in a similar tone as your suit.

If you've decided to seal your fate in a barong, then do so by all means. Just don't make the mistake of wearing the black, triangular neckpiece studded with a single pearl like so many grooms in the provinces still do.

"If you ask me," he says, "wearing such an accessory is the height of kabaduyan. Unless you want to look like a choirboy on your wedding day, the barong is best worn without any frills."

Shaky start for 'Bituing Walang Ningning'

By NESTOR U. TORRE
INQUIRER

The nostalgia craze in local teleseries was expected to peak earlier this year, but the good ratings figures chalked up by "Gulong ng Palad" has postponed the inevitable. Thus, our TV channels are trotting out new nostalgia-based "revival" series, starting with the musical melodrama of them all, "Bituing Walang Ningning."

Will the new series capture the attention, interest and empathy of today's viewers? We caught the show's first three telecasts and have these initial reactions to share:

Channel 2's "Bituing Walang Ningning" presents more of a back story than Sharon Cuneta's seminal film starrer. It starts with Dorina's parents (Zsa Zsa Padilla and Tonton Gutierrez) having a hard time mak-

ing both ends meet and assuring a good life for their expected child.

When the baby is born, their woes are compounded by her medical problems, which strain the couple's already limited resources to the breaking point.

Tonton's character is forced to resort to sidelines, one of which turns out to be drug-related and lands him in the slammer.

And Zsa Zsa is forced to accept a month-long singing engagement in Cebu, during which their baby is separated from them, and ends up in the care of a stranger, played by Ai Ai de las Alas.

This key switch strains credibility, and other improbable developments ensue, further watering down the series' possibilities for genuine empathy.

Even less welcome is the show's relentless emphasis on putting its central characters through the emo-

tional wringer, by overloading them with problems and stresses galore.

This "cruel" bent frequently reduces the series' lead actors to tears. Some of that is par for the course in boo-hoo melodramas, but excessively long and unrelieved crying and bawling jags are counterproductive, because they drown viewers in bathos.

Zsa Zsa is a good actress, but even she gets waterlogged by all the tears she's made to produce as she bewails the loss of her beloved daughter.

Even less successful is the show's determined effort to transform comedienne Ai Ai delas Alas into a "dramatic" actress. Ai Ai is given many opportunities to do this, and she does give her "challenging" scenes her all, but the effect is not quite right, because it looks effortful.

As for Sarah Geronimo as the new Dorina, she made her first appearance in the series last Wednesday.

Like Ai Ai, she did her level best to come up with a natural and empathetic performance—but she didn't fully succeed, because she played it pa-cute in some scenes.

The teenage actress should realize that she's already cute, so she doesn't have to resort to self-conscious embellishments to tickle viewers' fancy.

As these initial notes indicate, the show's first telecasts left something to be desired. But we continue to hope (against hope?) that the people behind the program can learn to let their story speak for itself, instead of pushing and underlining it so relentlessly.

If they do this, the new series' star will truly shine. But, if they keep gilding the lily in so insecure and determined a fashion, it will become apparent that this bituin is kulang sa tunay na ningning. (The star lacks genuine luster).

Nyoy and Nina tying the knot soon?

By DOLLY ANNE CARVAJAL
INQUIRER

Nyoy Volante and Nina have such an ideal relationship. That's the way it usually is for good friends who turn into lovers.

"We can't pinpoint exactly when it became us. We didn't go through the dating and courtship stage. Before we realized it, we were in love," reveals Nyoy.

In spite of their hectic schedules, they make it a point to watch each other's shows. "If I have recording or taping and she has a gig we meet up afterwards. But if I'm free, I really watch her show. I love being part of her audience as much as I love singing with her."

Will wedding bells ring for them anytime soon? Nyoy says, smiling, "Of course that's in the agenda but that has to wait for now."

Sometimes the best things are those we don't plan for. Looks like Nyoy and Nina will make the transition from being lovers to a married couple as smoothly as they did from friends to lovers.

What's up Polo?

I cornered Polo Ravales about the status of his relationship with Ara Mina. "MU," he quipped.

Define that overused acronym, I pushed.

"No commitment. Just attachment," he explained.

What about involvement?

"If that means intimacy, then, no." With both their bodies classified under "to die for," I wonder how long they can keep their chastity belts fastened.

WhadyaSay?

John Pratts sounded like a little boy as he lamented, "It's been two weeks since Say (Alonzo) and I last saw each other. When we get together, we will make up for lost time. We've both been so busy lately." Never enough time but always enough love. WhadyaSay, John?

No pressure

Cherrie Pie Picache doesn't feel the pressure to marry her live-in partner of six years, Gary Tria, just because they have a love child, Anton, 4.

"We'll get there," she says, "but we don't want to have a wedding just for the heck of having one. When we take the plunge we want it to be for keeps. I feel that when you're not married and staying together, you're on your toes. Married couples tend to take each other for granted since kampante na sila with each other." To tie the knot or not? Live in or leave? Love is always the answer to that...

Classified ads show

"Ano Ba'ng Hanap Mo?," the only classified ads-magazine show (IBC 13), hits TV screens on May 28, 3 p.m.

It's a pioneering concept where viewers will find everything they need—a car, house, cell phone, jobs, etc., maybe even a text mate. Hosted by Mickey Ferriols, Hyubs and Maoi Roca, the show is directed by my good friend Earl Ignacio and produced by my ever-dependable kapitid Toffee Runas of Batcave Productions. Each segment such as Tech Muna, Hanap Bahay, Palit Tayo, The Fuzz, is presented in a humorous and entertaining manner. To place ads call 425-1155 or 436-3579 or log on to www.anobanghanapmo.com.

Numb and number

Both Amnesty International and Commission on Human Rights Chair Purificacion Quisumbing are correct. It is not enough for the Philippine government to just say: No, our guys didn't kill all those communists, journalists and oppositionists. It is not enough for them to say: Go ahead, punk, prove it in court. How can the victims' families run after the suspects, unless the police find and arrest them first?

Malacañang's arguments actually resemble the typical defense resorted to by dictatorships of two decades ago against "enforced disappearances"—what Latin Americans called the "desaparecidos." Anti-government activists would be abducted and tortured, and the evidence forever erased by the simple cruel expedient of executing the prisoner and hiding the corpse (hence, the Filipino term, "salvaging"—I suppose, referring to the macabre task of unearthing the corpses).

The activists "were disappeared," to use jargon, precisely so that the government—when the accusing finger points its way—can simply shrug its shoulders. Indeed, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez's quip—"You have to be sure what is the reason—a drinking spree or because of a woman..."—was already a stock response by many governments even then.

Yet, in 1989, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights actually held Honduras responsible for the disappearance of a student activist, Manfredo Velasquez Rodriguez, at the National Autonomous University of Honduras. The court relied on exactly the same logic used by Amnesty and Quisumbing: that the abduction (in Honduras)—and the killings (in the Philippines)—fit a historical pattern.

The Court's language was uncanny. "Those disappearances followed a similar pattern, beginning with the kidnapping of the victims by force, often in broad daylight and in public places, by

armed men in civilian clothes and disguises, who acted with apparent impunity...It was public and notorious knowledge...that the kidnappings were carried out by military personnel or the police, or persons acting under their orders. ...The disappearances were carried out in a systematic manner [especially considering that the] victims were usually persons whom Honduran officials considered dangerous to State security."

The court said that the state's obligation under the human rights covenants is not just "to respect" human rights but "to ensure [these rights] to all individuals within its territory...." That creates the duty "to organize the governmental apparatus...so that they are capable of juridically ensuring the

Stated plainly, the charge was not that the government killed Manfredo but that it failed to give him justice. The blame thus cast, the "Who, me?" defense suddenly collapses.

What bothers me about the cold-blooded murder of Fernando "Dong" Batul, fierce critic of local politicos, radio broadcaster and former Puerto Princesa City vice mayor, is the privatization of terror and the localization of fear.

Today, even political slaughter has been devolved to private hit men and decentralized to



Passion For Reason

By RAUL PANGALANGAN
INQUIRER

had his thumb close to the base of his spoon, an absolute no-no if you ask the Filipino etiquette police!) Many Filipino Catholics were furious at "The Da Vinci Code." (I haven't read the book or seen the movie, but because of you, zealous objectors, I now promise to do both!) We love to speak of the human

rights revolution that was Edsa People Power I, yet we remain unmoved by grieving mothers, wives and children we see almost regularly in the headlines.

So it has worked, the strategy of decimating the Philippine Left. Isolate them, remind people of their links to armed strife and of their own killing fields. Cut them down one by one, push them back underground, and then accuse them of having turned their back on peace.

So it has worked, the strategy of going after individual critics, politically significant to attract media attention and project fear, but not too high up, like Ninoy Aquino, lest it spark the next conflagration. It's "kill one, scare 1,000."

So it has worked, the strategy of detaching politics from life. They who are in power tell us to avoid all talk about power: Leave it to us, and just stick to workaday concerns. This triggers a cycle: politics is drained of substance and is taken over by "trapos" [traditional politicians]. In their hands, communal politics is then robbed of its soul, we all shun it even more, and the trapos have the field all to themselves.

Clever. Far too clever. Heartless schemers, their sharp minds bereft of conscience. To defeat them, we must be shrewd before we can be compassionate. That is our curse: that to win, we risk becoming like the enemy.

Comments to passionforreason@gmail.com

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free and full enjoyment of human rights."

Significantly, the court contrasted the evidentiary threshold in state responsibility versus that in individual liability. "[T]he violation can be established even if the identity of the individual perpetrator is unknown. What is decisive is whether a [human rights] violation...has occurred with the support or the acquiescence of the government, or whether the State has allowed the act to take place without taking measures to prevent it or to punish those responsible."

provincial goons. Let the loyal warlords in the provinces do what they must, and find the hoodlums who meet their price. This dovetails Malacañang's style of deciding policy on the basis of the latest behest by either a "padrino," or political patron, or which momentary need, if answered, will sway the poll surveys.

But what bothers me even more is the lack of outrage, of indignation. Filipinos were up in arms over the spoon-and-fork incident at a Canadian school. (I saw a film clip of that boy—he

Public education in Rizal's and Aguinaldo's time

When you hear Christmas carols blaring from the department store sound system, you know we have reached the "ber" months and that as early as September shoppers are being conditioned to spend for Christmas. Recently I noticed bags, notebooks and ball pens at entrances to department stores. The sight reminded me that June and the opening of school are upon us again. In this day of Power-Point and whiteboards, I do not have to bother with allergic reaction from chalk dust, and I wonder what classrooms were like in the past, what kind of instruction people received. Was it as bad as portrayed by Jose Rizal in his novels?

Browsing through the five-volume compilation of documents The Philippine Insurrection Against the United States, by J.R.M. Taylor, in search of detailed material on the budget of the Emilio Aguinaldo government, I came across documents on the Department of Public Instruction issued in Malolos in October 1898 for the academic year November 1898-April 1899. There was established a Burgos Institute that offered entrance exam for secondary instruction, and the requirements were proven proficiency in the



Looking Back
By AMBETH OCAMPO
INQUIRER

The course work was very strong on Science and Math—as we still do today—though aside from Spanish and English, the students also took French. Sometimes I wonder whether we should let our students learn another language aside from English. It is also to be noted that at a time when only men went to school,

women were admitted to the Burgos Institute subject to the entrance exam and other requirements.

There was also a list of instructions that somehow sounded so familiar to us a century after. For example, due to insufficient or unhealthy school buildings, local government officials were asked to use church or parish houses as classrooms. It was specifically stated that teachers should not live in the schoolhouses. Classes were from 8 to 10:30am and from 2 to 5pm every day, and teachers were required to be in 30 minutes before classes opened to prepare and watch the arrival of the pupils.

Most interesting was Article 6: "School masters and mistresses who receive a salary from the State, province or town, cannot engage in any industry, trade or occupation which may distract them from fulfilling the duties of their charge; a violation of this provision shall cause them to incur the penalty of suspension of salary for three to six months for the first offense and removal from office for the second."

When we talk of our teachers today being overworked and underpaid and having to take on second or third jobs to make ends meet, we can only wonder whether the Aguinaldo government paid their teachers enough to demand the above.

Then there was the issue of local authorities asking teachers to do

other chores. Then as now that was a problem; so in 1898, it was stated that teachers could not receive visits; neither could they be disturbed by any local authority during school hours. Local authorities were also told to make provision in their budgets for teachers, depending on the resources of the town. Then there was Article 12 which provided that "the salaries of school masters and mistresses shall be punctually paid by the local

The course work was very strong on Science and Math—as we still do today—though aside from Spanish and English, the students also took French. Sometimes I wonder whether we should let our students learn another language aside from English.

presidente the morning of the first day of the month, or if such day will fall on a holiday, the first working day thereafter."

Reading through these stale laws gives one an idea of the importance that was placed on education or public instruction. Depending on the obsessive, compulsive behavior of the secretary of the Department of Fomento (whatever that was), who was Felipe Buencamino at that time, one sees all the rules on dealing with his department, for example:

"Article 10—Any person desiring to secure some service in the offices of the department ... shall apply with politeness and decorum to the watchman whom he shall advise of his wishes. The watchman shall reply to the greeting of the person interested and shall conduct him or indicate to him the room of the official sought. The latter shall receive the person interested immediately and shall dispatch the business if within his

jurisdiction, and shall give the person interested all pertinent explanations. If he cannot receive him or dispatch the matter at once, he shall have him wait in the public waiting room or request him to return on another day."

Conducting business with government must have been so complicated that such detailed instructions were drawn up. One wonders if we have similar rubrics today.

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

SAMU'T SARI

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Members of the Pilipino Contract Workers Association pose at the parking lot of the Hotel Nikko while awaiting the vehicles that would transport the garbage that they collected after a cleanup drive on May 21, 2006.



Two members of the Pilipino Contract Workers Association pose beside the bags of trash they collected during a cleanup drive on May 21, 2006, from the beachside of Hotel Nikko all the way to Paopao beach.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PILCOA conducts 1st community service event

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
EDITOR

The Pilipino Contract Workers Association, or PILCOWA INC., in collaboration with the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, recently conducted a cleanup drive under the Chamber's Trash for Cash program.

The cleanup drive was held at the beachside of Hotel Nikko all the way to Paopao beach on May 21, 2006, from 7am to 1pm.

Some 50 members participated in the cleanup.

"The group managed to collect around 100 bags of trash composed of dry leaves and garbage. Our goal is to do the cleanup drive every last Sunday of the month," according to Eli Mindanao, the group's chairman on Community Service.

This is the first project of the

organization under the administration of association president Ronnie Doca.

"We are on-call to residents if they want us to do a cleanup. They can call us at 234-3165 or 287-4390," said Mindanao.

He thanked those who sponsored the cleanup, including the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, Parks and Recreation's Tony Benavente and staff, DPW Secretary Jose S. Demapan and staff, and J.G. Sablan Ice and Water for the ice and water.

"We encourage other Filipino workers to join our organization for a cause and we are encouraging sponsors to support us in our cleanup efforts through donations of such items such as rakes, trash bags, etc.," Mindanao said.

The organization was formed on April 6, 2006, with around 90 members.



Members of the Pilipino Contract Workers Association pose at the beachside of the Hotel Nikko after conducting a cleanup drive on May 21, 2006 as part of their community outreach efforts.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Members of the Pilipino Contract Workers Association rake together dead leaves and other organic waste during a cleanup drive on May 21, 2006 from the beachside of Hotel Nikko all the way to Paopao beach.



Members of the Pilipino Contract Workers Association spent the early morning hours of May 21, 2006, to conduct a cleanup from the beachside of Hotel Nikko all the way to Paopao beach.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO